Surara
Pakidai

/62 cont./ The father

844 of the ch[illegible] later hangs it on the tip of a pupunha palm
[824] (Guilielma speciosa Mart.), which is connected with fertility
[842] magic; he buries the afterbirth in the planting. Two confine-
ments which I was able to observe were very easy and quick.
[142] On the lower part of the children's back I could see in each case
the grayish-black spots of pigment, the so-called Mongolian spots.

844 Immediately after birth, the mother with her baby took a
846 bath at the nearby riverbank and then lay down in her hammock
for one or two hours. After that, with the baby on her arm, she
already went back to her customary occupation.

845 If a complication arises during confinement, the chief, who
[622] is at the same time the witch doctor, is fetched.
[756] In contrast to most other Indian tribes, twins are reared.
845 If there should be triplets, which so far has never occurred, one
847 child would have to be killed, for, as they said, the mother has
only two breasts. Deformed children are killed and thrown into
the river.

852 There are no birth ceremonies, for up to its third year of
851 life the child belongs to the flesh and blood of its mother and
553 is not given a name before this.

854 d) Infancy and early childhood

The infant or young child is not left alone for a moment.
When the mother attends to her housework or gathers fruits and
berries in the forest, she carries it in a carrying band of tree bast
on her left hip, so that she has the right hand free for her work.
853 Even at night it sleeps with her in the hammock. The breast is
constantly at its disposal, so that it never /63/ thinks of sucking
its finger. This may perhaps also explain why these Indians have
such a perfect set of teeth. As soon as the teeth start coming in,
the child is given tough meat to chew on, in order to facilitate
teething. At the same time the long period of nursing, along
with abundant sunshine, prevents rickets. After 3-4 months the
baby is given supplementary food in the form of cooked, green
mealy bananas (Musa paradisiaca normalis), which are prechewed
by the mother, or a porridge made out of manioc flat-cakes.

Surára
Pakidái

854 514 [123] /64 cont./ If the child's nose is not clean, the mother carefully takes it between her teeth, presses its contents into her mouth, and spits them out. The women found it most unhygienic that I blew my nose into a handkerchief and carried it with me.

856 593 The little Surára and Pakidái learn to walk and talk at the same age as the children of civilization, and they are aided by their parents, siblings, and relatives. The pleasure of the relatives is great and they are overjoyed when the child is able to stand and walk and babble its first words, nãpe=mother and hãpe=father.

862 e) Name-giving

After the completion of the third year, a new, important period of life begins. The nursing period is ended, and the child, [851] which hitherto belonged to the flesh and blood of the mother (325b), has become an independent human being.

851 846 114 171 842 325b. This idea is very unusual for South American Indians. It should be remembered, however, that among most of the tribes the so-called couvade, the men's childbed, is practiced. Karl von den Steinen, who has examined the psychological basis of this custom, says that in this case the child, whether it be a boy or girl, is "the little father," so to speak, a part of the father, that is, a bit of his body. (K. von den Steinen, 1894, pp. 334 ff.) "The activity of the mother in this connection is compared to that of the soil, which receives the seed." (von Spix and von Martius, 1831, p. 133.)

000 553 796 [782] has become an independent human being. Now it is also given a name, which is taken from the animal or vegetable kingdom. The name is given to the father, when he offers his prayers in snuff-powder intoxication, by the gigantic animal and plant spirits living on

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not only let us take his picture but begged us to take it again, with his wife beside him. Then he caused general merriment by posing beside the 'public woman' who was painted and dolled up like a bird of paradise. In a third take, he stood between the two women, caressing their breasts in an excess of zeal. At this, enthusiasm knew no bounds. Even Uarema's brother, a venerable figure with his head crowned with the scars of old battles, burst into such a vehement laugh that he lost his horrible quid of tobacco. This change of mood enabled us to get on with our job. But our takes were often interrupted, for Uarema had started a vogue and couples would come along and insist on being photographed in their full feather rig.

## III

For our forthcoming river trips we were anxious to engage one of Luis Antonio's many brothers, who was apparently of the same age and had the reputation of being the tribe's most experienced traveller. To a certain extent he was even familiar with the Samatari on the other side of the cordillera. But his wife was expecting a child, so that he was prevented from going very far away from home. This seemed to us the most natural thing in the world. The wife was a tiny little lady, her only sign of maturity being her enormous belly, which very clearly did not owe its size to the swelling caused by internal parasites, the privileged possession of these women and children. Without this evidence of pregnancy she might have been taken for a girl of ten.

'The birth will come any day now,' Luis Antonio told us. 'But my brother won't be able to start straight away. He'll have to rest.'

We were reminded of the ritual of childbirth which with a few variations here and there is practised by all the Indians of tropical America. It affects the husbands as well as the wives and at bottom, in its way, contains a certain realism, characteristic of primitive peoples. Like us, they accept the principle of cause and effect and they do not really ascribe the pregnancy to strange half-magic phenomena. They know its cause for what it is—man, and his erotic acts. The effect, for them, is not in the woman herself: she is only a means, a vehicle. The true effect is the child. Up to this point, their attitude is no different from ours. The different point of view comes with the valuation placed by the Indians upon the cause after the effect has been produced. They see the role of

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846 the male as continuing in importance not only after conception—at which stage, in our own positivist scientific view, the male role ceases to count—but for a certain period after the actual birth. The male, the cause, is still in the picture, according to the Indian mind, when the mother and child are living a normal life.

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[128]
[115] I had known other native peoples, and in regard to these Indian beliefs on the subject of childbirth, Luis Antonio confirmed what had already come to my knowledge.

'In order for the birth to be a success,' he told me, 'when the wife is five
[225] months gone, the husband should stop eating peccary, snake or *carîle* (the name given in Venezuela to the carnivorous fish known in Brazil as *piranha*), and the flesh of any animal of an aggressive nature.' (Here, principles of hygiene were mingled with elements of magic, as happens also in the more advanced
[846] religions.) 'Then, before the birth, during the birth and after, the man must stay in the hammock without stirring, because any strain on his part, or any mishap that came his way, would affect the child and might have dire results.'

[562] The explanation sounds quite normal and natural once one admits the principle of continued causation in the man, the woman being regarded simply as a means. In fact there is no need for her to obey the injunction to stay in the hammock. She will continue her daily round until she feels 'something break inside her'. Then, with the midwife, she will hurry to the appointed place on the river-bank.

*123
844 I once had the chance of being present at a birth. I was with the Taurepan Indians of the Gran Sabana, and I watched hidden behind a cluster of Mauritius palm, where I could follow the principal stages of the proceedings. The woman, with her head tilted back, was seated on the clay bank in a sort of arm-chair shaped hollow which had been scooped out—whether naturally or made for the purpose I do not know. The midwife knelt at her feet, waiting. For some time both remained in this position. The woman kept giving little cries—but not really cries of pain. After a brief labour, the mother uttered one long howl which sounded to me like an 'u . . . u . . . uh' of rapture, and the midwife rose to her feet, holding up a tiny, mottled infant head downwards by the heels.

Still holding the baby by the feet, the old lady washed him in the river—
—with exactly the motions you might expect from a washerwoman giving the final rinsing to some heavy garment. I couldn't see the next step, but a few

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minutes later the two women were quietly walking home with the baby, who appeared to be dead.

While the mother goes about her normal tasks, with the child tied on her back all the time, the father stays in the hammock, absolutely motionless, eating nothing but fruit and palm-hearts—'they don't heat the blood,' Luis Antonio assured us.

Among the Guiana-Amazon Indians I have never heard of the father himself suffering from birth-pangs during this period of rest. Such reports, however, have come from travellers and observers of the Indian tribes inhabiting the southern regions of the lower Amazon. Before one can believe them one must accept a little more than the theory of the inter-relation of cause and effect. A good dose of barefaced auto-suggestion would also be needed to account for this phenomenon, and only the most undeveloped of the Indians would be capable of it.

## IV

Of kindred interest, while we are on the subject of childbirth, is the organization of Indian society. It has been asked whether the pattern is patriarchal or matriarchal, and what part is played by the individual family.

If the question is limited to the Shirians, the answer is simple: they have reached no stage of organization above the rudimentary animal level. The family has the sole function of producing life and protecting it until the offspring is capable of fending for itself. Their society is not patriarchal, because the role of the family ceases where its physical functions cease, at the point where, in civilized societies, moral functions begin. Nor is the pattern matriarchal, because the women are held in a form of slavery, though the very lack of an exact social system means that they sometimes emerge from this to become the companions of the men—a state of affairs which may be regarded as more emancipated, or less.

The children of both sexes, while they are young, remain the exclusive responsibility of the women, but when the boys reach an age at which they can do without their mothers (this generally means as soon as they cease to be breast-fed) they become independent males and do not belong to anybody in particular. Up to a certain point the father is free to pick out one who may be

/489 cont./

844 123 They also invited us to do this, but, not knowing the meaning of the practice, we declined to do so.

846 After this, the mother took the little creature and went off to her house. There she rested for two or three days before resuming her work in the "conuco."

844 Later, another child was born at night. We were not there, but we were informed that it had been born in the house, to which green leaves were brought for the birth.

## Puberty

881 To reach puberty is an important event, especially for the girls. It is considered that the girl has reached puberty at her first menstruation. Her mother, older sister, or another woman who might be her guardian gathers leaves and builds a wall around her hammock to isolate her from everything. For approximately one week, the girl never leaves this area. Her mother brings her food, water, firewood, and any other things which might be needed.

At the end of this retirement, the girl comes out, adorned with flowers, leaves, cotton belts, strings of beads, and feathers.

## Maturity

885 122 A man is considered mature when he has marriageable children. The head of a settlement is frequently a grandfather, but sometimes the settlement may be governed by a somewhat younger man.

## Old Age

888 Retirement from active life is somewhat gradual, depending upon the strength of the individual.

Old persons are respected, but they are no longer leaders in the affairs of the settlement. They are cared for even when they are no longer capable of contributing to their own support. /Plates I-V follow./